



## GUARDAPARQUE

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**Guardaparque** is a bi-weekly publication prepared and issued by the International Ranger Federation (IRF), an federation of about 60 Ranger Associations from around the world.

**Guardaparque** carries reports on emergency service and law enforcement incidents, reports on protection of parks and the natural and cultural resources within them, reports on programs to educate visitors and communities on the values of parks and protected areas, and reports on the people who are responsible for all these activities.

**Guardaparque** contains information from rangers in the field on operations conducted in the field. From time to time, it also reports on political issues affecting those operations. It is supplemented by a quarterly newsletter, **The Thin Green Line**, which focuses on IRF activities.

If you have a submission for **Guardaparque**, please send it to the editor, Bill Halainen, at [Bill\\_Halainen@nps.gov](mailto:Bill_Halainen@nps.gov).

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### EMERGENCY SERVICES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

#### **Kenya – National Park System Three Rangers, Four Poachers Die In Shootout**

*Cover note:* "The following story records a gun battle between guards and poachers in Kenya. The demand for ivory comes mainly from Japan and China. Both these countries will come to the Conference of Parties of CITES in June to ask for legal ivory sales from Africa. Tuskers are being killed in India and other range countries of Asia for demand mainly from these two countries. Up to 80% use of ivory in these countries is for making signature seals called hankos. As for works of art, like netsuke, the demand is small and can be filled by naturally dead elephants."

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Three Kenyan rangers and four poachers died during an overnight shootout in the remote southeast, the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) said on Saturday, May 19th. It was the latest clash in a decades-old war in the east African nation between wildlife rangers and poachers who kill big game like rhinos and elephants prized for their horns and tusks. "The Kenya Wildlife Service regrets to announce the death of three rangers who have been gunned down by bandits during an operation in Tana River District," the wildlife authority said of the clash in the early hours of Saturday.

"During the fierce exchange of fire, the rangers killed four poachers while others escaped with injuries," it said, adding that two AK-47 rifles and two axes were seized. The rangers were part of a seven-member force patrolling the Idsowe area of Tana River district, some 350 km (215 miles) southeast of the capital Nairobi, KWS said. "During the same operation, one ranger corporal was also seriously injured and has been taken to Ngao Hospital in Tarasaa".

Poaching is a perennial problem in the east African country, whose wildlife parks are a major tourist attraction. Kenya is a focal point in Africa's booming illegal trade in animals and plants. The global trade is worth more than \$10 billion each year, experts say, making it the world's third biggest source of criminal income after drugs and guns. KWS said an "intensive hunt" was underway for the poachers, who escaped after Saturday's incident.

[Source: *Reuters*]

### **United States – Denali National Park Two Climbers Killed In Fall On Mt. McKinley**

Two climbers died in a 1900-foot fall during a descent of Mt. McKinley on the evening of Thursday, May 17th. Mizuki Takahashi, 36, of Lake Forest Park, Washington, was pronounced dead shortly after the fall. Her partner, 27-year-old Brian Massey from North Bend, Washington, remained unconscious throughout the night and succumbed to his injuries Friday morning. Takahashi and Massey had left the 14,200-foot camp on Tuesday morning for an ascent of the Upper West Rib route of Mt. McKinley. A third team member stayed behind at the 14,200-foot camp. At 6:30 p.m. Thursday evening, a mountaineering ranger patrol staged at the mountain's 17,200-foot High Camp witnessed the fall, which began from an elevation just below 19,000-feet near the Messner Couloir. The roped pair fell to a point just below High Camp. A rescue team comprised of members of the ranger patrol and two climbing guides traversed to the team and confirmed that Takahashi had died. The rescue team performed an initial assessment of Massey, who was immediately carried back to the ranger tent for emergency medical treatment for severe injuries. Massey never regained consciousness and he died Friday morning at 8:30 a.m. The bodies were recovered from High Camp on Saturday morning after winds subsided in the area.

[Source: *National Park Service Morning Report*, United States]

### **United States – Denali National Park Two Climbers Die In Avalanche On Mt. Barrille**

An avalanche in Ruth Gorge on Mt. Barrille killed two climbers attempting the Japanese Couloir route on the peak's east face in May. The climbers, 33-year-old Andre Callari of Salt Lake City and 32-year-old Brian Postlethwait of Park City, Utah, were seen beginning the 10 to 15 hour climb around 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 15th. On Thursday afternoon, members of another climbing party notified a ranger patrol in the Ruth Gorge that the two climbers were overdue and that their skis were still sitting at the base of Mt. Barrille.

Whiteout conditions on Thursday evening and most of Friday precluded a surveillance flight or a ground-based investigation. When skies cleared Friday evening, a National Parks Service contracted helicopter flew to the peak. At approximately 9:30 p.m., two rangers on board the helicopter spotted climber tracks leading into an area where a slab avalanche had released from a shallow gully near the summit ridge. Following the fall line down, rangers saw what appeared to be two figures in avalanche debris at the base of peak.

Due to flat light and decreasing visibility, the helicopter returned to Talkeetna. On Saturday, the helicopter returned to the debris area with two mountaineering rangers. The climbers' identities were confirmed and their bodies and gear were flown from the accident site back to Talkeetna.

Mt. Barrille, at 7,650-feet, is one of the more frequently climbed peaks in the Ruth Gorge, with multiple routes ranging in technical difficulty. The Japanese Couloir is a moderate, Alaska grade III route featuring steep snow and ice.

[Source: *National Park Service Morning Report*, United States]

### **Uganda – Queen Elizabeth National Park Squatters Evicted From Park**

Ugandan soldiers have evicted hundreds of squatters from a National Park because of fears their cattle might spread foot-and-mouth disease to endangered wildlife. The squatters were chased out of Queen Elizabeth National Park, in the west of the country, over the last weekend in May amid reports they were also poisoning lions to protect their herds. "They were there illegally. The problem should have been solved earlier," Minister of State for Tourism Serapio Rukundo told Reuters. "The outbreak was why we had to act fast."

Foot-and-mouth disease does not usually affect humans and most animals that catch it recover. But it can kill the young and seriously weaken adult animals, threatening wildlife already endangered by poaching and loss of habitat. Rukundo said the number of tourists visiting the park, formerly one of the most popular in Uganda, had dropped sharply because the reserve was filling up with thousands of domestic cows. "They do not come to see cows, they come to see wild animals," he said, adding that troops found evidence supporting long-held suspicions the squatters were also poisoning lions. "In one house we found three lion skins. The occupants have been taken to the police and will be charged," he said. Rukundo said local pastoralists had taken the opportunity to settle in the park when refugees fleeing Democratic Republic of Congo's 1998-2003 civil war trickled across the border into the area.

[Source: *Reuters*]

## **SPECIES MANAGEMENT**

### **South Africa – Mountain Zebra National Park First Big Cats Back In Park**

Two 16-month-old female cheetahs were released into Cradock's Mountain Zebra National Park last week, becoming the first large predators to freely roam the park in over 100 years. The pair, along with two males, has spent three months acclimatising in bomas (holding pens) and becoming familiar with the electric predator-proof fencing that now surrounds the park. While in the bomas, rangers fed the two wild-caught animals, but now they will hunt for their own prey, according to Megan Bradfield, regional communications manager for South African National Parks.

The two males, both about five years old, will be released near the end of June, once the two younger females have established themselves. Two more males will be released within the next two months. The reintroduction of the big cats is an important step in restoring the predator-prey balance as well as enriching biodiversity. They will be monitored by radio tracking to enable rangers and researchers to ensure that they acclimatise and to study their patterns of movement.

[Source: *Dispatch Online*, South Africa]

### **India – Gir National Park Rare Lions Being Threatened**

Gujarat, the Indian state that is home to the world's only natural habitat for the rare Asiatic lion is refusing to relocate the big cats despite calls from conservationists who say it is the only way to save the species.

More than a dozen lions have died, mainly due to increased poaching, in the last two months in Gir National Park. Yet authorities in Gujarat in western India are resisting calls to shift some of the population to a neighbouring state. "The lions are a symbol of Gujarat's uniqueness in the world," Chief Minister Narendra Modi said in a recent speech. "Why should we share it when we are capable enough? It is a matter of the pride of India."

Environmentalists say pride is coming before the interests of the lions. A second home is needed, they say, because it is too risky to keep all the world's Asiatic lions in one place. Since March, 14 lions have died, seven were killed by poachers, four drowned in wells dug by villagers living inside the park, two died due to infighting and one died of natural causes. The carcasses of those killed

by poachers had claws, skulls and bones missing. The bones are used for traditional Chinese medicine and the claws are worn by some men as pendants in the hope of increasing their virility. Conservationists say keeping all the big cats in Gir NP is also a serious risk as a single epidemic or natural disaster could wipe out the entire population, which was 359 in 2005.

"Lions belong to the whole planet and Gujarat has to learn to share them as it will serve as a life insurance for the last surviving Asiatic lions," said Belinda Wright, director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India. As far back as 1994, the Wildlife Institute of India recommended Kuno-Palpur Sanctuary in the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh as the most suitable site for an alternate home for the lions. Following federal government approval for the relocation, authorities have been preparing the ground for their arrival. Villages inside the sanctuary have been relocated, the habitat restored and the prey-base enhanced, say forest officials, adding the site is now ready to receive the lions. But Gujarat officials refuse to pursue the experiment, saying Madhya Pradesh is ill equipped to handle the lions. The federal government says it wants the lions moved fast, for the sake of the animals and the entire country. "It is a matter of the pride of India," central Environment Minister A. Raja said in a recent interview to NDTV news. "If the lions are going to be put at stake, then ultimately not only Gujarat will go down in the eyes of the world, but so will the entire credibility of India."

[Source: Reuters]

## **PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS**

### **Republic of Korea – National Parks**

#### **Environmentally Unfriendly Facilities Will Be Removed From National Parks**

Korea National Park Service (KNPS) has launched its second program to remove environmentally inappropriate facilities in the National Parks. In 2006, KNPS had already cleaned up 78 facilities, including old shelters, business centres and barbed wire entanglements. Since most of these facilities are located near the trails or in the heart of the National Parks, their intrinsic beauty has substantially impaired.

In 2007, KNPS plans to remove 98 facilities. Noteworthy among them are old shelters in mountain parks, military bunkers on the Daecheongbong (peak) in Seoraksan National Park and military guard posts in Taeanhaean National Park, a coastal park.

Even though KNPS has continuously worked for the elimination of the environmentally unfriendly facilities, many obstacles, such as ownership of properties and right of businesses, impeded KNPS's effort. This year a variety of facilities are included in the elimination list: shelters and public comfort rooms owned by KNPS; private residences and business centres; guard posts and barbed wire entanglements for military purposes; and public institution facilities such as temporary police stations and resting places. Privately owned properties will be recommended to be withdrawn or improved voluntarily, but some facilities, which are having a critically impact on the ecosystem and on the scenery of the National Parks, will be forcedly removed.

Baemsagol Shelter is one of the facilities destined to remove this year. This shelter is one of the six shelters located on the ridge of Jirisan National Park. Since the shelter is stationed near the uppermost stream of Baemsagol Valley, people have been concerned about pollution of the headspring by sewage from the 22-year-old shelter. If this second removal activity is accomplished successfully, the ecosystem condition and the visitor service capability of the Korea National Parks will be greatly improved.

[Source: Gyu Sung Lee, Dadohaehaesang National Park]

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Prepared and published by the International Ranger Federation as a service to rangers around the world. Submissions should be sent to Bill Halainen at [Bill\\_Halainen@nps.gov](mailto:Bill_Halainen@nps.gov).